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Government
Publications

Women of change

Companion Booklet



Ontario
Women's
Directorate

2 Carlton Street
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Toronto, Ontario M5B 2M9
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1994

**Please feel free to
photocopy**

**Aussi disponible en français sous le
titre *Les grandes dérangeuses*.**

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INTRODUCTION

The Women of Change poster is a gift from women's groups to the young women of Ontario. This poster shows clearly that female role models can be found in every aspect of our daily lives. The companion booklet is intended to provide teachers, facilitators and others with additional information about each of the women featured on the poster.

Women of Change was originally conceived as a sequel to the Women of Action poster, produced by the Ontario Women's Directorate in 1987. Both posters put faces to some of the leaders, events and milestones in modern women's history in Ontario.

Participants in consultations about the sequel told us that Women of Change should take a new approach. Instead of only acknowledging the stars, they wanted the poster to tell the stories of women whom other women saw as role models: "ordinary" women who perform acts of courage or who achieve successes within the confines of daily demands and struggles. Women whose lives they could understand, and empathize with -- women like their own mothers, colleagues, friends, fellow volunteers and activists.

It is hoped that the Women of Change poster and booklet will promote thought and discussion about all the women each of us know who can be, and are, role models.

We also added sections about specific issues women face collectively, to provide a context for some of the issues raised in the women's stories. While only a sampling of issues, these sections also serve to highlight the complexity of women's lives.

BIOGRAPHIES

Dyane Adam

Dyane Adam's friends call her a "multiplier," a woman who generates projects. She says she facilitates or "jump starts" change. However you describe it, Dyane Adam makes things happen.

The sixteenth and youngest child of a family from Casselman, a community of just over 2,000 in Eastern Ontario, she is the only one of her siblings to have gone to university. Trained as a clinical psychologist, Adam worked in Baie Comeau and Rouyn, Québec, and Cornwall. In 1987, she moved to Sudbury where she taught at Laurentian University and served as vice-rector. In 1994, she became the Principal of York University's Glendon College.

Adam is fascinated by collective action and its place in the struggles of Franco-Ontarians and of women. She sees her role as that of a builder, a leader working with her community to develop a common vision. She has been instrumental in launching a number of organizations and projects among women and francophones in Sudbury, including the Collectif des femmes, the Table de concertation féministe francophone (a provincial network of francophone women's groups), and a mentorship program for young francophone women in Northeastern Ontario. Adam herself is a role model, living proof to young Franco-Ontarian women that they can succeed, and that their personal achievements need not come at the expense of a commitment to community.

Hawa Aden-Mohamed

As a young woman, in the early 1960s, Hawa Aden-Mohamed questioned why girls in her native Somalia were forced to spend their valuable time on housework while boys could devote theirs to studies. A supportive father and siblings helped her chart a different course. She became a teacher, won a scholarship and earned a Bachelor degree in nutrition in India. The Somali government then wanted her to return home and resume teaching, but, with financial help from her family, she stayed on to earn a Master of Science degree in Child Development. Her return home was marked with further expectations -- that she teach home economics to women -- but once again she chose her own path, joining the new "women's department" and working to change women's lives rather than supporting the status quo.

As the subsequent head of that department, Aden-Mohamed developed programs and policies to improve women's literacy, education and health, especially as they related to female genital mutilation (FGM), and worked with the United Nations agencies UNICEF and UNESCO.

Years later she left government to develop a more pro-active, hands-on project -- a business which allowed women to generate their own income and become independent. The business first trained unskilled women, then employed them making indigenous clothing and furniture for tourists. Plans to start a revolving fund to train and hire more women were halted when she found herself forced to seek refuge in Canada in 1992. She soon was back to work, this time with Women's Health in Women's Hands, a Toronto-based community health clinic, where her fight against FGM continues. Often at the risk of rejection from her own community, Aden-Mohamed is determined to rid FGM of its "cultural practice" label and have it recognized as a human rights issue, a women's issue and a health issue.

female genital mutilation

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is the forced mutilation of the genitalia of girls. It usually is performed in childhood but sometimes can be done in the teenage years. There are several forms of FGM. The less severe form is circumcision, where the hood of the clitoris is removed. In excision, all or part of the labia minora is removed as well as the clitoris. The most severe form is infibulation, where all the external sexual organs are removed and the two sides of the vulva are then stitched together, leaving a tiny opening.

These procedures are widely performed in some African and Asian countries, and have been for centuries. Its traditional objective is to keep the girls "clean" and to protect their virginity. Several countries support FGM legally. The procedure is sometimes performed in hospitals. It is also performed by village elders with blunt instruments, and no anaesthesia. Girls who have been subjected to the procedure can develop severe infections that could lead to sterility. They are also likely to find sexual relations extremely painful.

The practice of FGM is illegal in Canada, where it is considered aggravated sexual assault under the Criminal Code. The crime can carry a sentence of life imprisonment. In Ontario, the College of Physicians and Surgeons has a policy prohibiting the practice by licensed doctors. Doctors are also asked to report cases of FGM or requests for the operation to the Children's Aid Society, as well as any information related to the procedure being performed by other people.

Maria Albizurez

When Maria Albizurez, her husband, and their two children applied to immigrate to Canada from Guatemala, they were asked where they wanted to live. The family requested a French-speaking community where her husband, an agricultural engineer, could find work in his field. On a cold December in 1987, they landed in the primarily English-speaking port city of Thunder Bay.

After six months of language training, Albizurez, a teacher in Guatemala, found work coordinating English as a Second Language programs for the Immigrant Women's Planning Committee (now Thunder Bay Immigrant and Visible Minority Women). Since 1992, she has been employed as a settlement worker with DOORS, the Diocesan Office of Refugees Services. In 1990, Albizurez gave birth to her third child.

Albizurez's political activism, nurtured in Guatemala, has blossomed in the Lakehead. She serves on the board of the Multicultural Health Coalition, works on wife assault issues in the immigrant and refugee communities, and organizes workshops on family stress. Thunder Bay, once an accidental destination, has become her chosen home.

Georgette Amihère

Georgette Amihère is a child care worker, mother, activist, and student. She came to Canada from Ghana in late December 1990 to join her husband, and settled in the Toronto area. She had trained and worked as a child care worker in her native Ivory Coast; but in Ghana, Amihère was involved in adult education, teaching French as a Second Language. In Canada, she returned to her first love, Early Childhood Education, and recently enrolled in a program in Toronto.

Amihère faced significant challenges on moving to Ontario, not the least of which was her limited English. She sought help, and met a support worker who steered her in the direction of the Association des femmes noires francophones (AFNO). Founded in 1982, the Association provides support and practical assistance to French-speaking African and Haitian women who experience difficulties related to work, integration into the community, learning English, and domestic violence.

Less than four years after her arrival in Canada, Amihère is an active member of AFNO, working on behalf of French-speaking Black women who face the double obstacles of racism and linguistic barriers. She is studying part-time at a local community college, in English, and is working in a French-language day-care centre in Etobicoke.

Karen Andrews and Mary Trenholm

Braces. Karen Andrews' kids needed them, but her health care plan, which provided benefits to family members, wouldn't pay for them. The problem was that although Andrews was the sole support for her family of four, the children weren't legally hers, but rather those of her partner of eight years, Mary Trenholm.

Andrews first raised the issue in 1985 with her employer of six years, the Toronto Library Board. The Board's private insurer was willing to extend coverage to Andrews' family, but the public plan, administered by the government of Ontario, was not. With the strong support of colleagues and her union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Andrews took the government to court. She argued that the government's theoretical claim not to discriminate against lesbians and gays made no sense when it actively discriminated, in practical terms, against lesbian and gay families. "You're not gay in isolation," insisted Andrews, "you're gay in relation to other people." Rather than conceding that its practices were discriminatory, the government of Ontario redesigned the health care plan in order to remove its explicit bias in favour of heterosexuals. But the plan still didn't recognize Andrews' family.

The public challenge changed the lives of Andrews, Trenholm, and their children. They believe that their public coming out, however daunting, politicized them and increased their sense of community. For Andrews, it led to a career change -- she traded the public library for the Osgoode Hall library, and went to law school. One of the cases she studied there was *Andrews v. Ontario (Minister of Health)*. Says Andrews, putting her achievements in perspective: "I know that I did more as an activist than I will ever do as a lawyer."

same-sex benefits

One in ten Ontarians is a lesbian, or a gay man. Many, including some of the women profiled on this poster, live in loving, committed relationships. Several have children. Some, though by no means all, are "out" to their families and communities, openly identifying themselves as lesbians or gay men. They hold jobs, pay taxes, and cast ballots at election time.

Yet they do not have access to the same rights or employment benefits as their heterosexual counterparts. Upon the death of her partner, or a member of her partner's immediate family, a heterosexual employee may take bereavement leave, time off to grieve and attend the funeral. A lesbian, whose relationship is not legally recognized, cannot. A heterosexual man whose employer provides a dental or extended health plan can arrange to have his partner covered by the same plan. In most instances, his gay counterpart cannot. Heterosexual couples can make medical decisions for one another and adopt children. Lesbians and gay couples cannot.

Lesbians and gay men have fought for years to have these injustices redressed, and to have their relationships recognized in the same manner as those of heterosexuals. Some employers have taken steps to bring about equality in the workplace for all of their employees, regardless of their sexual orientation, but the pace of change is slow. Legislative and attitudinal changes are still required to bring resolution to this issue.

Association of Ontario Midwives and midwifery

For as long as women have been giving birth to babies, other women have been assisting them. There have always been midwives, women who guide and support others through the birthing process. The history of midwifery, however, has not been smooth. Only in 1991, did midwifery finally gain official status in Ontario with the passage of Bill 56. This act provided midwives with access to hospital facilities and authorizing payment for their services under the province's health care plan. The Association of Ontario Midwives is the professional body serving midwives. It promotes midwifery as an integral part of the health care system.

For centuries, midwifery was practiced informally, with women learning the profession from their mothers and passing it on to their daughters. The rise of a male-dominated medical profession in the 1850s signaled the beginning of the end for midwifery, as

doctors stepped in to take control of childbirth. Legislation passed in the Province of Canada in 1865 placed midwifery under the jurisdiction of licensed medical practitioners, a group that did not and could not include women, since women were not then admitted to medical schools. To further strengthen doctors' hold on childbirth, Ontario's College of Physicians and Surgeons began prosecuting individuals thought to be practicing medicine without a license. Not surprisingly, midwives were a favourite target. By the mid-1940s, the midwife had virtually disappeared in Ontario, except in some small, isolated areas and in some Aboriginal communities.

The rise of social movements in the 1970s, in particular the women's movement, saw a renewed interest in midwifery. Unhappy with the increase in medical intervention in what ought to have been a natural process, and feeling they had little or no control over the births of their own children, many women began to turn to midwifery. Ontario midwives and others interested in midwifery began to organize politically in the mid-1970s, and within ten years a strong pro-midwifery lobby had emerged in the province. In 1984, a merger between the 10-year-old Ontario Nurse-Midwives Association and the Ontario Association of Midwives, resulted in the formation of the Association of Ontario Midwives (AOM).

Today, women have choices about one of the most profound life experiences - childbirth.

Rosa Becker

In 1954, 29-year-old Rosa Becker met 23-year-old Lothar Pettkus. Shortly after, she started living with him; an arrangement that lasted for 17 years. During that time, they built a successful bee-keeping operation, near Hawkesbury, with an estimated net worth of \$300,000. Their joint assets, however, were in Pettkus' name alone, a situation Becker was to regret.

When the relationship ended in 1972, Pettkus claimed that what was theirs was, in fact, his. Becker took him to court. In 1976, a county court judge awarded Becker \$1,500, 40 hives without bees, and her court costs, finding that her contribution to the relationship was "in the nature of risk capital invested in the hope of seducing a younger defendant into marriage." Outraged, Becker appealed. Her victory before the Ontario Court of Appeal was appealed in turn by Pettkus until the Supreme Court of Canada, in a precedent-setting decision, ruled in Becker's favour in December 1980. The decision should have been worth ten times what she was awarded in 1976. Pettkus, however, used every means at his disposal to avoid paying, and it was 1985 before a partial award was made to Becker. The money was immediately seized for legal costs by the lawyer who had spent 11 years defending her interests.

In 1986, Rosa Becker was earning \$60 a week plus board as a housekeeper for an elderly farmer. She left a series of letters to old friends and enemies before committing suicide on November 4, 1986. She wrote: "With my death the law will have to change."

And the lawyers too. Don't be sad about my death. It will straighten some things out."

the worth of women's work at home

Women's work in the home has historically gone unrecognized as a significant contributor to the wealth of a country. With efforts by many, including the publication of *If Women Counted, a New Feminist Economics* by Marilyn Waring in 1988, governments in the western world began to re-evaluate the economic contributions of household work.

In a report released in 1994 and based on survey data of 1992, Statistics Canada estimates the value of household work is between 31 per cent and 46 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

StatsCan defines household work as "those economic services produced in the household and outside the market, but which could be produced by a third person hired on the market without changing their usefulness to members of the household." StatsCan analysed three broad groups of activities in its study: domestic work, caregiving for household members and shopping. Included in these activities were play with children, gardening and care of adults. Excluded from its calculations were such functions as emotional support, problem or dispute resolution in families, and volunteer work.

StatsCan estimated that to replace a woman's work in the home would cost \$16,580 in 1992 and to replace a man's, \$9,960. The agency also concluded that about 66 per cent of household work was performed by women. However, women's share of the value of household work was lower, reflecting the lower market value placed on that type of work.

Manisha Bharti

In a cynical world, it's easy to condemn leaders for wanting the money, power or glory that comes with their positions. But Manisha Bharti sees leadership as a responsibility. "If you recognize you have leadership qualities, then you have a responsibility to act on them," says Bharti, who was only 17 when she was named to the Royal Commission on Learning in 1993.

Bharti, the eldest of three children, credits a particularly supportive family for her philosophy. But it's Bharti herself who embodies that philosophy. In elementary school,

she organized a fund raising effort for a local project and was chosen to attend a number of leadership and motivational conferences.

Later, Bharti worked to bring young people together and presented student concerns as student council president, founder and chair of the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Inter-School Student Council, and Eastern South Region vice-president of the Ontario Secondary School Students' Association. She designed and led workshops and conferences on student leadership, motivation and empowerment. At the county level, Bharti sat on three committees of the local school board, including the Race Relations and Ethnocultural Equity Committee, the Environmental Practices Steering Committee and Vision 2000, a committee on the future direction of education.

Her extraordinary commitment and leadership has been recognized. Her school twice named her its Citizen of the Year, and she received the Cornwall Environmental Resource Centre Volunteer Award.

Bharti also volunteered with Cornwall's Alzheimer Association and the Hotel Dieu Hospital, was president of Octagon, the Optimist Youth Service Club, youth co-ordinator of the Indo-Asian Association of Cornwall, and guide leader for Worldfest. On top of all this, she has maintained a school average above 90 per cent, finished in the top eight per cent of the University of Waterloo's Mathematics Contest, and won a summer research fellowship in Molecular Biology and Genetics at the University of Guelph.

Huguette Burroughs

To be a francophone in Ontario is to struggle with invisibility and inaccessibility. Being blind exacerbates the problem, as Cornwall's Huguette Burroughs knows only too well.

A native of L'Orignal, Burroughs is editor of the weekly *Le Journal de Cornwall*, the only French language newspaper serving Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry counties. She joined the paper shortly after it was founded, and became editor in 1978. Her vision, failing since adolescence as a result of a congenital disorder, disappeared completely after she became a journalist. She has pursued her career undaunted, becoming one of a few journalists with a disability working in the mainstream press.

Burroughs also works for disability rights and the rights of Franco-Ontarians, although she sees herself more as a consciousness-raiser than as an activist. In the pages of *Le Journal de Cornwall*, she relates the experience of francophones in her community, and challenges governments and policy makers to honour historic commitments to that community. She was involved in a campaign to establish a French language community radio station, now on-air, and lobbies for greater accessibility to all services for people with disabilities. Going beyond the campaigns and the editorials, Huguette Burroughs chooses to lead by example.

Audrey Kewaquom Caskanette

A survivor of violence, Audrey Kewaquom Caskanette is completely committed to her own healing and that of others. "Her development of a sharing workshop, Spirit Dancing, is an inspiration to all who have the privilege of participating, as she shares an experience of abuse and healing from a native perspective," say the women who nominated Caskanette for the poster.

Caskanette, an Anishnaabekwe, developed the workshop out of her own experiences of abuse, and from the teachings of her elders. Both her mother and great-aunt were strong role models, having survived their own struggles. The workshop provides a safe place for both women and men to break their silence about violence. Caskanette explains that the whole community suffers when violence and abuse occur, so both women and men need to heal. The Talking Circle process lets the participants identify physical, emotional abuse, and "spirit abuse." The Talking Circle can become a Healing Circle and the members can "get in touch with the spirit again," says Caskanette.

Caskanette's commitment extends to her work at the Victoria County Women's Resources Centre where she counsels women from across the county who seek help in dealing with violence and abuse. She also volunteers with the Native Brotherhood in Millbrook Correctional Centre, providing a place for the men to find support and recognize their responsibilities. "Unless they're given a chance to reconnect with who they are, their chances of reintegration are minimal," says Caskanette.

Comradettes Service Club of the Blind

Talk about turning the tables. Instead of uniting simply to improve their own lives, this group of blind women organized to help others.

The Comradettes Service Club of the Blind, composed mainly of visually impaired women, was founded in Toronto in 1950. Its mandate is first to raise funds for others and second to provide a support network for its members. Their sole fund-raising event, an annual bazaar, has provided funds for numerous projects. The Comradettes have "adopted" blind children in developing countries, purchased wheelchairs and radios for the Inuit, and sent amplifiers, microwave ovens and donations to the Canadian National Institute for the Blind summer camp. The service club also donates funds to Deaf Blind Services, Mobile Eye Care Unit, Interval House, Casey House, Christian Blind Mission, Operation Eyesight Universal, and many other social agencies.

The Comradettes offer friendship and support to newly blind women and support one another, with minimal help from a few sighted volunteers who provide transportation services to meetings and keep records.

Colleen Cooney

Colleen Cooney was a career woman who steadily climbed the ladder of success from elementary school teacher to principal. Then, in 1981, at the age of 45, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Her intuition told her abandoning her career would improve her health. Cooney embarked on a spiritual quest, found solace in thought and comradeship with like-minded people, and married.

Cooney's health problems taught her to take charge of her life. Her next challenge would be to take charge of her environment. In 1990, she went to a public meeting in Orillia to learn about a garbage incinerator planned for the town. She says she "just got angry." In three months, she and others had organized and successfully stopped the incinerator project.

That success was a catharsis for Cooney. As a citizen and teacher, she had "naively" trusted authorities and governments and taught her students the same respect for their judgements and decisions. But, in her fifties, she started asking tough questions, researching issues, and stopped blindly accepting the assurances given her by previously respected authorities. She had once used toxic household cleaners. Now she speaks knowledgeably about the toxic chemicals to be found in drinking water and about ways to minimize landfill waste. And she fights government inaction on the environment at every chance she gets. "I'm still angry, that's what motivates me," she says.

Lina Costa

Lina Costa grew up in the Portuguese Azores in the North Atlantic then went to teach in Macau, a Portuguese colony in China. It was her first job, her first time on her own and it sparked questions about social inequalities between men and women that she had first witnessed as a young girl. Four years later, she immigrated to Canada.

In Canada, Costa found that her teaching credentials were not considered adequate, so she applied her energy to helping immigrant office cleaners access the services they needed. It was then she discovered that many of the women were being abused by their husbands. Her tireless efforts to help these women, and develop linguistically and culturally appropriate services to support them, led to the creation of the Abrigo Centre for Victims of Family Violence.

Costa's special commitment is to young women, to ensure that they don't fall into the same cycle of abuse their mothers may have been taught to accept. "It can't go on like this," says Costa, who has already spent 12 years working to end abuse within her community and has no plans to stop.

violence against women

Young girls would like to believe that they can grow up, study, have a career and a family without ever experiencing violence. They can't.

A survey published by Statistics Canada in November 1993, shows that "half of all Canadian women have experienced at least one incident of violence since the age of 16." Most people believe that acts of violence against women are committed by strangers, in dark alleys. It's not the case. The most dangerous place for a woman is her home. Almost half of all women interviewed in the survey reported violence by men known to them -- a husband, boyfriend, colleague, relative or neighbour. The vast majority of assaults are never reported to the police.

Violence is committed against women of all races, of all ethnic, social and age groups, of all sexual orientations; it is not triggered by the way they look or dress or behave. Women don't ask for it. Victims are not responsible for the acts of violence committed against them.

A woman victim of violence is more likely to have psychiatric problems or attempt suicide. Children raised in violent homes are more likely to grow up to be abused or to be abusers themselves.

Women all over Ontario have been actively involved in preventing wife assault and sexual assault. They set up shelters, crisis centres, information phone lines, support networks, have developed public education campaigns and materials to raise awareness about violence. Thanks to their efforts, the population is now more sensitive to those issues and more accepting of the responsibility of communities and society to end violence against women.

The Desloges sisters

In 1912, the Province of Ontario passed *Regulation 17* banning the teaching of French in Ontario schools, but sisters Béatrice and Diane Desloges refused to stop teaching in French. The government cut off their paychecks. Undeterred, they continued to teach at École Guigues, a school in Ottawa's primarily French-speaking Lowertown. In September 1915, the Desloges sisters received a letter ordering them again to stop teaching in French.

At the request of parents, the sisters responded by opening a private French school in a nearby chapel, and their students from École Guigues followed. The whole operation was then moved to two stores in the area, where it remained until the Christmas holidays. However, by the time classes were set to resume in January 1916, the students' parents had had enough of these makeshift schools and ordered their children to return to École Guigues. Led by the Desloges sisters, accompanied by a group of mothers, and escorted by a couple of men, the women and children made it past the police officers guarding the school and took it over. Twenty five police reinforcements dispatched to the school later the same day were unable to dislodge them.

Using hat pins to defend themselves against the constabulary, the "gardiennes de l'école Guigues," protectors of their children's right to an education in French, remained in the school for several months. Their leaders, the Desloges sisters, refused to abandon the takeover despite the cancellation of their teaching certificates and threats made against them by the police. Although the takeover of the school eventually ended, today's Franco-Ontarians, inspired by this brave group of women, continue to campaign for education and social services in their language. École Guigues will soon become a social center for Franco-Ontarian seniors, some of whom may well have been the Desloges sisters' students.

regulation 17 and French-language education

When Diane and Béatrice Desloges and the other "gardiennes" seized control of École Guigues in January 1916, it was only the latest move in an escalating campaign waged by Franco-Ontarians against the erosion of French language rights and culture in Ontario.

In 1912, the Conservative government of Premier James Whitney issued *Regulation 17*, limiting the use of the French language in schools to the first two years of elementary instruction. The following year it was amended to allow one hour of instruction per day. Ontario's francophone population, led by the Association canadienne-française d'éducation de l'Ontario, fought back, demanding the right to an education in French. The government retaliated by cutting subsidies to school boards who refused to comply with *Regulation 17*, and decertifying teachers who continued to use French in the classroom. Following the takeover of École Guigues, students and their families held a series of demonstrations and unsuccessfully appealed to the federal government to disavow *Regulation 17*.

Though *Regulation 17* was less strenuously applied after World War 1, the battle was far from over. Women such as Jeanne Lajoie, who ran an illegal school in Pembroke in the 1920s, and many others kept fighting until *Regulation 17* was rendered unenforceable in 1927. But it was not officially repealed until 1944.

Still, French-language education in this province was not a given. As recently as the late 1970s, angry francophone parents and teachers in Penetanguishene set up another illegal school in an old post office to protest the fact that the local school board would not give children the education in French they deserved. This was the start of the Marchand case, which went all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. The court ruled in 1987 that Francophones in Ontario had a constitutional right to an education in their language.

Since then, three French-language school boards have been created in Ottawa, Toronto and Prescott-Russell.

Pam Ellis

Pam Ellis was working at a Port Perry group home for the disabled when she became pregnant with her first child. When she told her employer that she intended to take maternity leave beginning in September 1987, and that she would return to her job

following the leave, he ordered her immediately transferred to another group home with younger, more violent patients. Ellis agreed to accept a transfer upon her return to work. Her supervisor was not satisfied, however, and for three months Ellis endured a harassment campaign. Finally, despite a doctor's letter pointing out the risks for Ellis and her baby of such a move, she was fired for refusing the transfer.

Ellis did not accept her dismissal. She took her case to the Employment Standards Branch and to the Ontario Human Rights Commission. In February 1988, a Human Rights Commission fact-finding team upheld 19 of Ellis' 22 complaints, and her employer decided to settle. While she did not get her job back, she was awarded cash, although not enough to cover her expenses and lost wages. A resulting problem with Unemployment Insurance regarding her maternity leave benefits brought Ellis before the Federal Court of Canada where an umpire ruled in her favour. The federal government's appeal of the decision was dismissed on October 20, 1992, leaving Ellis the victor.

Before she was fired, Ellis did not consider herself a political person; however, her five-year battle transformed her into an activist. As her case drew public attention, other women approached her to discuss similar situations. It became clear that Ellis was not alone, and that legislation and regulations governing the presence of pregnant women and mothers in the workplace were lagging sadly behind the times. The Ontario Pregnancy Reform Employment Group was thus formed.

In 1991, the Ontario government brought changes to legislation making pregnancy and parental leaves longer and accessible to more people.

Joanne Francis

Joanne Francis is an Aboriginal woman and a citizen of the Territory of Akwesasne, near Cornwall. Trained as a nurse, she had been working in her field for a year and a half when a car accident put her permanently on the other side of the nursing station.

Told that she could not practice nursing from a wheelchair, Francis became a social worker and a disability rights activist. She worked in vocational rehabilitation in Ottawa before returning to Akwesasne in the late 1970s, where she has continued her work on disability rights. Francis' work corresponded with the beginning of an Aboriginal disability rights movement, a movement which has evolved significantly in the last 15 years. Originally led by caregivers or the families and friends of people with disabilities, it has, of late, come to be considerably more consumer-driven. Its leadership is now assumed by people with disabilities.

Francis is one of those leaders. She is employed as a community mental health worker with the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, directing community members to appropriate social services. In addition to her work on substance abuse, she initiated the development of the Akwesasne Focus Group on Disability, a community-based cross-

disability advocacy support group for people with disabilities, their families and friends. Francis actively participates in the consumer movement within "Indian country" with Aboriginal persons who live with disabilities, and was involved in launching the National Aboriginal Network on Disability. She served as its founding president from 1990 to 1992.

In late 1991, she co-ordinated the Inter-Nation Gathering on Disability, and organized hearings at the Gathering by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Disabled Persons. Francis is committed to developing a local, grassroots-based disability rights movement within First Nations communities, and to raising awareness of disability rights issues among the Aboriginal leadership. She stresses that her vision is entirely consistent with Mohawk tradition which, she points out, attempts to integrate everyone into the community, regardless of ability.

Janice Giavedoni

Hamilton-born Janice Giavedoni moved to Ottawa in 1989 to attend Carleton University. She was drawn to Carleton because it was wheelchair accessible, thanks to a series of tunnels and elevators, and because the previous year it had established the first attendant services program in a university setting. This allowed students with disabilities to live in residence and participate fully in university life.

Giavedoni's "evolving disability" put her in a wheelchair at the age of 19, a move that she says gave her freedom and actually increased her mobility. As her disability became more pronounced, so too did her activism. "The longer you're disabled, the more crap you see; the longer you're a woman, the more crap you see," she explains. And, if you're Janice Giavedoni, the more involved you get. "I know I can't change the world on my own, but I can try my damndest to do something," she adds.

A consumer of what was then Carleton's Attendant Care Program (now renamed, in part at Giavedoni's instigation, the Attendant Services Program), Giavedoni quickly became involved in the administration of the program. Traditionally, consumers of attendant services have not been able to choose the sex of their attendant. One reason was the costs of administering such programs; but also because of the long-held view that persons with disabilities are asexual, and thus that the sex of their attendant does not matter. Giavedoni initiated a successful campaign to allow users of the attendant care program the freedom to choose the sex of their attendant. This made Carleton's the first attendant services program to provide a written guarantee of same-gender choice of attendant.

Carol Gott

Once, Carol Gott's dream was to be a kindergarten teacher. She was trained in motivating children with special needs so, when she found herself settling in rural South-East Grey county, it was natural that she and her husband would take in foster children. Their family now includes three children of their own and two young adults with special needs.

But when Gott wanted to work outside her home she ran up against various barriers, including a complete lack of child care. So, she put her unique ability to work to get other people to believe in their dreams. In 1985, she organized a group of friends and colleagues to form South-East Grey Community Outreach, an organization which develops and co-ordinates programs, of which she is now executive director. Since then, she and others have established numerous supports for women and care givers including seven licensed child care centres.

There are now many programs available, some of which allow teen mothers to continue with their education; provide seasonal child-care for farmers; give parents a break; educate teens about birth control; provide transportation and home support for seniors, and provide emergency care in a child's home by especially trained individuals. Gott also had a new early childhood course located in her community to provide training for those who would be employed in these jobs.

Gott acknowledges that she has the skills to motivate a community to work together, but she insists that other community members who get the work done need to be acknowledged in addition to herself.

Carla Hanson

Carla Hanson loved working as a land and air ambulance attendant. For 18 years, she drove and flew out of Sioux Lookout, tending the injured. Then, a work-related back injury forced her to leave her chosen profession. While still on the job, she had invented a device, the CPR Landmarc, which helps attendants keep their hands in place while performing cardio-pulmonary resuscitation. Hanson struggled to convince governments and banks to support her idea. She and her husband invested much of their own money in the project. Other countries began to adopt it, but there was still little response in Canada. Hanson has since partnered with a company to market her invention and the device is being used by some CPR practitioners in Ontario.

Despite constant pain from her injury, Hanson has also begun an interior design company, a house and pet-sitting service, is planning to write childrens' books, and as a member of the Women Inventors Project, speaks to young women about the confidence and creative thinking required to become an inventor.

Hanson credits her positive attitude acquired from her grandmother, for helping her deal with incest, an alcoholic father, and the stress of being a caregiver to her mother, her sisters and others.

INTERCEDE

When domestic workers in the Toronto area decided to organize themselves they faced a formidable challenge: how to organize effectively in light of the isolated nature of domestic work. Domestic workers work, and often live, in private homes, completely out of touch with each other. Since they are frequently new immigrants, they do not even have previously established social links to draw on. Often, they are forced to take up foreign domestic labour so their own children back home can be cared for.

But these women succeeded against all these odds and proved, once again, the benefits that come from organizing. They formed INTERCEDE, the Toronto Organization for Domestic Workers' Rights. They were able to lobby to extend existing laws to cover domestic workers, winning fairer wages and benefits. In addition, domestic workers have also won the right to apply for permanent residency and sponsor their children after they have spent two years in Canada. Today, INTERCEDE continues to advocate for domestic workers to be allowed to immigrate as permanent residents, rather than under the special domestic worker category. It also provides educational, social and recreational opportunities for its 1,700 members.

Christina Jenkins Howson

In 1923, Chatham-born Christina Jenkins and her husband founded what was to become one of Canada's foremost Black newspapers, *The Dawn of Tomorrow*. Based in London, a city with a substantial Black population, this eight-page weekly drew heavily on the Associated Negro Press in Chicago for its news. It published between 4,000 and 5,000 copies, until it dropped to twice-monthly publication in 1926.

When James Jenkins died in 1931, circulation dropped again. Jenkins continued to publish the paper intermittently until 1947 when, now remarried, she attempted to rebuild it. By 1950, she had brought circulation up to its previous level though by that time the paper was distributed to most readers free of charge.

Christina Jenkins Howson was widowed for a second time in 1955 and left with nine children to raise. An active member of her community and her church, she once turned down an invitation to run for city council. She continued to publish *The Dawn of Tomorrow* until shortly before her death in 1967. It continues to be published occasionally by family members.

Helen Levine

Helen Levine was a 40-year-old social worker in the adoption services branch of the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa-Carleton when, in 1963, she read Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique*. Suddenly it all made sense. She bought a dozen copies for her friends, and got involved in the emerging women's movement. She became a member of consciousness-raising groups, joined the 1970 Abortion Caravan and, with four other housewives, presented a brief before the Badgely Commission on abortion. Feminism, she says, "gave me a way of seeing the world and myself in it. I realized that as a woman I had significance, that other women had significance, and that separate and together we had value."

Then in 1973, carrying Phyllis Chesler's book *Women and Madness* under her arm, Levine had what she calls "a breakdown and breakthrough." While in treatment, she gained first hand experience of the mental health system. She had previously worked as a social worker, but her experience as a patient changed her. It opened the door to a restructuring of her life and forced her to look inward. She began to write about her experience with psychiatry and that of other women, inspiring others to speak out. She joined the faculty of Carleton University's School of Social Work, and developed a feminist critique of social work.

Retirement in 1988 didn't slow Levine down one bit. She has continued to do feminist counselling, and has rediscovered the athleticism of her youth, playing tennis, cycling, and working out in a gym. She remains involved with Amethyst, a women's addiction treatment centre, the feminist counselling collective Woman to Woman, and the Crones, a group of older feminists, as well as exploring "free-fall writing," a kind of stream-of-consciousness writing, with a group of three other women.

Kay Livingstone

All the world's a stage, and Kay Livingstone played a leading - and supporting - role. Actress and activist, Kay Livingstone championed the cause of Black women in Canada and fought for social justice for her entire community, while pursuing a career as an actress and radio host.

The daughter of Christina Jenkins Howson (also featured as a Woman of Change), Livingstone literally learned her activism at her mother's knee. A talent for the performing arts led her to study drama and speech arts at the Royal Conservatory of Music and later, in Ottawa. While working in the public service in Ottawa and hosting a radio show, the first Afro-Canadian to do so, she met and married Antigua-born George Livingstone. They moved to Toronto and began raising a family of five children.

Throughout this period, Livingstone continued her career on the amateur and professional stage, in television, in film, and on radio. She also put her public profile to use in

promoting the concerns of the Black community. In at least one CBC radio program, *The Kay Livingstone Show*, she focused on the traditions and cultural activities of Black communities throughout the world. In 1950, she founded the Canadian Negro Women's Association, and served as its first president. In 1973, she organized the first national conference of Black women in Canada, a step leading to the creation of the Congress of Black Women. In addition, Livingstone served with distinction as the president of the Women's Section of the United Nations Association, chaired the International Affairs committee of the local Council of Women and the World Service of the local YWCA, as well as the Canadian Commission of the Canadian Council of Churches. She was the Regional Chair of the National Black Coalition. Kay Livingstone died in August 1975.

Jean Lumb

Jean Lumb was driven to work for her community by her great respect for two people, Pauline McGibbon and her own father. McGibbon, whom she met when they were both on the Board of Directors at Women's College Hospital, went on to become the first woman Lieutenant-Governor. One of her father's messages was that the most important action a citizen could take was to vote, but in order to know who to vote for, a person had to be involved. Lumb has never stopped being involved.

As president of the Chinese Women's Association of Ontario, Lumb was chosen in 1947 to be on the committee which would lobby Prime Minister Diefenbaker to repeal the *Chinese Immigration Act*, dubbed the *Exclusion Act*. The only woman on the committee, she was paid special attention because the issue was family reunification. From 1923 until 1957, when the act was changed, few Chinese women were allowed to immigrate to Canada, even though their husbands, sons and fathers were here. Lumb received the Order of Canada for this work, and proudly notes that the first such award granted to a Chinese Canadian was to a woman. She has also been awarded the Queen's Jubilee Medal.

Lumb got an early start; she was only 17 when she and a cousin started a fruit store business in Toronto, with a \$200 loan from her uncle. Her later financial and social achievements, stemming in part from a successful restaurant business she ran with her husband, were sidebars to her other successes advocating on behalf of her community.

Karen Miersma

Karen Miersma broke the silence. It took Miersma nine years and the money from a lien she was forced to put against her own home, but she made sure her father would take public responsibility for the sexual abuse he perpetrated against her when she was a child.

When she began the lengthy court battle which led to her success, survivors of incest could only initiate legal action up to four years after the last incidence of abuse. This excluded those, for example, who had buried their memories of abuse. When the legal

decision finally came down, on October 30, 1992, Miersma had won the right for all such survivors to take legal action up to four years after the start of therapy for the abuse.

Today, Miersma is getting on with her life, with her husband, a job at a bank, a collection of teddy bears "because I never had one when I was young" -- and by speaking to other young women who suffered as she did. Her message: "Don't be silent anymore. Find someone who will listen."

Cleo Miller

Cleo Miller was a police officer in her native Jamaica and, when she emigrated to Canada, she planned to take up the same line of work. After a short stint as a tool-crib operator in Uranium City, Saskatchewan, she studied Law and Security in Sudbury with the intention of becoming a corrections officer.

Miller had just begun working in a group home for girls when she suffered a serious car accident. Undaunted by a long recovery, and with three sons to raise, she started university, studying psychology and sociology. Now a single parent but with a double degree in hand, she counsels and assists low-income parents and is president of the North East Ontario Chapter of the Black Women of Canada.

It is Miller's drive, passion, understanding and commitment that makes her stand out. Through all her own growth, she has always helped others. She recalls putting her own children in day-care so she could help other mothers who lived in social housing. "People end up where they end up not because of choice but because of circumstance," she says. As a role model and an activist, she has shown and taught other women they could improve their own lives.

Opheera Nasir

Opheera Nasir and her husband were successful business people, operating a pharmacy in their native Guyana. They continued their entrepreneurial efforts after their arrival in Canada in 1973, exporting pharmaceuticals and health foods to the Caribbean and South America. Both became very involved in raising funds to build and establish the Islamic Foundation of Toronto, the largest Islamic Centre in Canada.

Nasir has volunteered much of her time to organize seminars, workshops and discussion groups for women. In particular, she organized women in the Muslim community to sell food to raise approximately \$100,000 for community development. Nasir has travelled

extensively in the Middle East as a representative of the Canadian Muslim community, networking with various women's groups and raising funds for local projects. She has visited Mecca twice. At 67, Nasir keeps fit by walking three miles a day at the gym and spends as much time as she can with her 13 grandchildren.

The women who nominated Nasir for the poster say her initiative, creativity and hard work have raised the profile of Muslim women within their own community and within Ontario.

Hanna Newcombe

Dr. Hanna Newcombe was only 16 years old when she escaped with her parents from Czechoslovakia in 1939, three days after Hitler occupied Prague. Canada's restrictive immigration policies meant their chances of being allowed into this country were increased only when her parents claimed they were farmers -- they were business people -- and converted to Roman Catholicism -- they were Jews. A sign of the activist to come, Newcombe refused to convert. Later, Newcombe would learn that the rest of her family had been exterminated in the gas chambers. Newcombe "would seek to assuage her guilt, her grief, and her rage by making it her life's work to establish morality and order," says biographer Lucille Marr.

In 1945, Newcombe graduated from McMaster University with a BSc. in chemistry, winning the prestigious Chancellor's Gold Medal for academic achievement. That same year, she was invited to work on the Manhattan Project, which produced the nuclear bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. For Newcombe, the Hitler alternative was the worst imaginable. But, when the bombs were dropped, she felt personally responsible and began to investigate peaceful solutions to international conflicts.

By 1950, Newcombe had married and graduated with a doctorate in chemistry -- at a time when only five per cent of the doctorates granted were to women. She wanted both to raise her three children and have a career, but in the 1950s that was socially unacceptable for a woman. So, typical of many housewives of that era, she threw her energies into volunteering with many of the peace and nuclear disarmament organizations which formed in Ontario in those years. These included the World Federalists, the Voice of Women and the newly formed Canadian Peace Research Institute where, in 1962, she was hired as a researcher. Her husband also joined the institute, and five years later, they left to establish the Peace Research Institute from their Dundas home. Since the death of her husband, Newcombe has published the *Peace Research Abstracts Journal* and the *Peace Research Reviews* on her own. She also teaches a course called *Search for World Peace* at York University.

women in science

Women gained their earliest recognition in scientific fields that built on their accepted roles as nurturers and caregivers. In the 1880s and '90s, a band of largely feminist-inspired women doctors, including suffrage leaders Emily Stowe and her daughter Augusta Stowe-Gullen, fought for the right to study and to practice medicine in Canada, and created their own institutions such as admit Women's College Hospital. Nevertheless, the Royal College of Surgeons did not its first woman surgeon until 1941 and Women's College was not re-cognized as a teaching hospital until 1956.

Outside the areas considered as women's sphere, there was little advance until long after the second wave of feminism began in the 1960s. For example, as late as 1986, only 10 per cent of engineering students were women, taught by a faculty that was six per cent female in the physical sciences, such as physics and chemistry, and two per cent female in the applied sciences, such as medicine. However, the number of women graduating with higher level degrees has been increasing. By 1987, women received 19 per cent of doctorates in the physical sciences and eight per cent in applied sciences.

Willi Nolan

In chronological order, Willi Nolan's resume reads: street kid, part-time marketer, university student, professional recording artist, full-time married mother and single mother. Only then does Nolan mention that she founded Project Esperance, a 111-unit non-profit housing development in Toronto for women and children survivors of family violence. And, that she is a business woman and ecology advocate who has built a non-chlorinated tampon business and opened an ecologically friendly dry-cleaning operation.

Nolan uses whatever tools she's been handed to do what needs to be done. She left a physically abusive relationship after she met a woman who had endured 27 years of battering before leaving. Nolan realized she didn't want her own daughter to see such abuse. Like some other women who have suffered abuse, she says that "becoming aware that I was abused gave me the tools to success because I realized I had certain skills and I could tell other women they could change since I had done it myself." A subsequent stint on Family Benefits Allowance, which she calls government abuse because it prohibits its recipients from doing anything, gave her the motivation to develop and build Project Esperance. As she puts it, "I couldn't sit around on welfare doing

nothing." After that, she started a company which markets tampons made from non-chlorinated cotton. A major reason for going into business, says Nolan, was to make money to fund other projects which would help women.

With each success has come greater recognition and respect. Nolan uses that recognition to advocate on behalf of the issues and women she represents. "Being a woman helps me deal with women's issues, being poor helps me relate to poor people's needs, being a Black woman helps me deal with Black women's issues. I use the resources I have at hand to be pro-active," she says.

Northern Woman Journal

In early April 1973, 600 women from Northwestern Ontario gathered in Thunder Bay for the Northern Women's Conference. This three day event galvanized women and spurred the growth of feminist organizing across the North.

It also led to the birth of the *Northern Woman Journal*. Originally seen as a means of keeping conference participants in touch with each other, the *Journal* quickly grew beyond its bulletin board function. It became "a forum for the exchange of ideas among Northwestern Ontario women, a vehicle for promoting feminist awareness and action, [and] a life-line for women in isolation." [Fiona Karlstedt, *Northwestern Ontario Status of Women Initiatives 1973-1987*, Thunder Bay, n.d.]. Many women made their first acquaintance with feminism in its pages, while others found support for their growing activism.

Collectively produced since the beginning, the *Northern Woman Journal* is one of the longest running feminist newspapers in Canada. It has documented the evolution of the women's movement in Northwestern Ontario, taught countless women production and editorial skills, and helped to build a strong community.

Maryka Omatsu

Maryka Omatsu was born to Japanese-Canadian parents in Hamilton in 1948. Very early in her career she got involved in human rights struggles. But it wasn't until the 1980s, while working as a lawyer to redress the internment of Japanese-Canadians during World War II, that she learned her own parents had been among those interned. In 1988, the federal government granted Japanese-Canadians a compensation package.

Omatsu's Masters thesis was on women in the Canadian labour force. That research sparked an interest which led her, as a lawyer, to work on the Jamaican Nannies case and help strike down the guest worker law. Her efforts on behalf of the Grassy Narrows Indian band resulted in their successfully stopping pulp mills from discharging mercury

into the river. Later, she became chair of the board of inquiry that adjudicated complaints filed under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Once her term at the Human Rights Commission was over, she went back into full-time practice. She pursued her interest in environmental law, representing several Aboriginal and environmental groups. In early 1993, she was appointed justice of the Ontario Court, Provincial Division, the first Canadian woman of Japanese descent to be appointed to the bench.

Omatsu's approach can be summed up in this quote from an article in *Images* magazine: "I wanted to do something that I enjoyed, that I was passionate about and that I felt would be socially valuable. It's harder to make it simply by pursuing what you love. But if I have been successful, that's the reason."

Midi Onodera and Premika Ratnam

The lives of Midi Onodera and Premika Ratnam are not simple. Any given hour could find them completing applications for funding, negotiating contracts with other artists, speaking to community groups, advocating on behalf of individuals and social justice issues, providing administration to various film and video organizations, adjudicating awards, or making films and videos. As successful filmmakers, they have to be artists, but they also have to be businesswomen, managers, fundraisers and activists.

Onodera's focus is racial and sexual stereotypes. She has a long list of film credits to her name including *Girls in the Band*, *A Performance by Jack Smith*, *David Cronenberg - Artist's Profile*, *The Displaced View* and *Home Was Never Like This*. *The Displaced View* won her a special citation, the Gemini Multicultural Award, and an honourable mention at the San Francisco International Film Festival. Her films have been screened throughout the world. She also wrote *Heartbreak Hoteru Then/Now* for the CBC. Onodera has also been a guest speaker at universities, an awards juror, and has held positions on various advisory boards including the National Film Board's celebrated Studio D (women's studio).

Her most recent project, *Sadness of the Moon*, is her first feature film -- an accomplishment for any Canadian film maker and a particularly significant one as it is the first feature made by a Japanese-Canadian.

Ratnam's films and videos include the *Many Voices* series for TVOntario, about racial stereotyping; *You Are Not Alone*, about the rights of women who have been assaulted by their spouses; *Voice of Our Own*, about the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women; *A Dream to Keep*, about four Canadian dancers who were killed in the Air India bombing while en route to India to get advanced training in Indian classical dance; and *Sexual Assault: Can Rapists be Cured?* which won a CBC Telefest award.

Ratnam, too, has selected and recommended work as a jury member for numerous arts councils and the Genie and Gemini awards. She was also president of the Independent Film and Video Alliance, has organized a special conference of artists of colour and native peoples, and has taught courses in media literacy and racism in the media.

Independent filmmakers Midi Onodera and Premika Ratnam are making their mark. As artists in their own right and as advocates struggling for cross-cultural representation in funding institutions, they ensure that there are other independent voices in Ontario media and arts.

Ontario Farm Women's Network

Dianne Harkin of Winchester is the embodiment of the power of one -- the power of one person to influence enough others so that social change occurs. Determined to raise the social and economic status of farm women, in 1975 Harkin pulled together a group of women in eastern Ontario under the banner Women for the Survival of Agriculture. Her enthusiasm and commitment were infectious. Farm women across the province formed their own local organizations, including La Femme et la Gestion de la Ferme. These local groups joined together in 1988 under an umbrella organization, the Ontario Farm Women's Network.

Through organizing, farm women were able to develop educational programs and improve their farming knowledge, business skills, and leadership abilities. For example, with the support and mentoring of the members, farmer Lorraine Lapointe was encouraged to run for a seat on the Milk Marketing Board and in 1992, she became the first woman elected to that board. Network founding member Carol Rock of Stratford started the Women and Rural Economic Development Project, which held its first conference in 1992.

Today, farm women in Ontario are increasingly recognized as equal business partners on their farms. But it wasn't without some sacrifice, says Harkin. In a message to other women who consider organizing, Harkin says she should have reserved some time for herself and her family. A dozen years as a full-time volunteer took their toll, and she became physically ill.

Harkin is the first farm woman to have received the Order of Ontario.

women in agriculture

Prior to European settlement, Huron women in southwestern Ontario were the province's first farmers. They tended beans, corn, squash and other staples which are now grown around the world. European women pioneers took responsibility for cattle, food and clothing while the men cleared the land or worked as casual labourers for spare cash. However, with the coming of the railroad and the rise of cities and commercial agriculture, women were no longer content to be silent partners on the farmstead. Some joined groups such as the Women's Institute. The Women's Institute was founded by Adelaide Hoodless in 1897 to prevent other tragedies from occurring after one of her children died of tuberculosis brought on by tainted milk. Through these groups, women perfected their homemaking skills and lobbied for technological change such as milk pasteurization, for temperance (banning alcohol) and for new community services.

Others were motivated by the rising protest movement of farmers, a major feature of the Ontario political landscape from the 1890s through to the 1930s. These women worked through co-ops and political parties and rallied behind such leaders as Agnes Macphail, Canada's first woman M.P. who was elected on a wave of farmer unrest in 1921. In the 1970s, rural communities were once again threatened as a result of collapsing produce prices and the resulting farm bankruptcies. Again, women took the lead in forming advocacy organizations. One such organization was the Winchester group Women for the Survival of Agriculture, which was created in 1975.

Carmen Paquette

When Carmen Paquette travelled through francophone communities in Ontario in the late 1970s doing community development, on more than one occasion the local priest tried to have her thrown out of the village. Her sin? She had the temerity to ask Franco-Ontarian women what they wanted. Women, she believed, had the right to decide for themselves what was right for them.

Paquette inherited her commitment to social justice from her father, a union organizer. She became a neighbourhood activist in Ottawa's Lowertown, before going on to do community development among Franco-Ontarians. She then moved to political organizing among francophone women. Says Paquette: "I became a feminist in English and then went to work in the Franco-Ontarian community because I believed my community deserved to be exposed to feminism." In fact, Paquette played a critical role in the

development of Franco-Ontarian feminism, one where women's traditional concerns for family and cultural survival come together with their belief in their right to equality as women within Canadian society and the francophone community.

When Paquette came out as a lesbian, her political vision expanded still further. As she says, "The feminist movement taught me once and for all that a society must not maintain a unity based on the silence and oppression of some of its members. I've learned my lesson well, and base my lesbian affirmation on it." She was a co-founder of the National Lesbian Forum and one of the leaders of Ottawa's International Lesbian Week, still retaining strong and vital ties to the Franco-Ontarian women's community and to the women's movement as a whole. Paquette's experience as an often invisible minority served her well as the first "openly gay" member of the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

Thelma Powell-Brown

On January 10, 1965, equipped with a ruler, a piece of blue construction paper, a stick of chalk, and a book of nursery rhymes, Thelma Powell-Brown opened the Powell-Brown Therapeutic Nursery School in Downsview. On that first day, she had one student.

Trained as a primary school teacher in her native Jamaica, Thelma Powell-Brown came to Canada as a domestic worker in 1958, and was subsequently employed as a social worker in a Toronto area children's centre. Powell-Brown and her husband opened their own centre because she was convinced that "if children with severe emotional problems received special attention during their formative or pre-school years there would be a much better chance of adjustment." The school welcomed children aged 2 1/2 to 7 with a range of mental, physical, and emotional disabilities. All were treated with respect and affection, in programs designed to meet their potential skills. The first institution of its kind in Canada, the Powell-Brown Therapeutic Nursery School was soon operating to capacity and had to move to larger quarters.

Widowed in 1968, Powell-Brown continued on her own. The school's reputation soon spread, and her work was recognized throughout Canada, the U.S., and Europe. She received numerous awards, including a Centennial Medal from then Prime Minister Lester Pearson in 1967, the Ontario Medal of Good Citizenship in 1977, and, in 1979, a Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal from the Governor General. Powell-Brown left her position as director of the Centre in 1979, and subsequently founded a consultancy business, Powell-Brown Child Care and Community Services. She died in 1981, and was buried in Jamaica.

women in education

Women were the first teachers in pioneer Ontario. Women taught their own children or were hired as nannies and governesses in the homes and private schools of the wealthy in the early 1800s. When elementary education was made free, public and compulsory in 1871, women teachers out-numbered men, mainly because they cost less to employ. Women teachers were paid about half of what men were paid. By 1919, for every male teacher there were five women teachers. Beginning in the 1880s, organizations of women teachers began lobbying for equal pay and the right to vote. Suffrage or the right to vote was won in 1917 but explicit pay differences for women and men performing the same job were not eliminated until 1951.

Women are still not equally represented at senior levels of education or education administration. In 1972, nine of 600 secondary school principals in Ontario were women and fully 99 per cent of educational administrators were male. During the 1980s, women made up 70 per cent of the teaching force in primary grades, 33 per cent in the secondary grades, and only 17 per cent at the university level. In its 1984 report, *Some Questions of Balance*, the Commission on Canadian Studies labelled this disparity a "national disgrace."

Bonnie Robichaud

She remembers the moment as though it were yesterday. She was in her supervisor's office on a day in late June 1979. He propositioned her yet again. She said no. He ignored her, as always. And this time she turned and walked out, vowing that "whatever it took under the sun," he would never do it again. Says Bonnie Robichaud now, "I didn't know how much there was under the sun."

When she filed a grievance a month later, this cleaner at the military base in North Bay embarked on a journey that was to change the face of workplace relationships between the sexes in ways she could not have imagined. All she wanted was for him to stop. Robichaud's case wound its way through the system until the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in 1987 that employers in areas of federal jurisdiction are responsible for the behaviour of their employees. As a result of the Robichaud decision, most large workplaces in Canada now have sexual harassment policies in place to protect their employees.

The decision to fight back changed Robichaud's life and that of her family. Her five

children, she says, now resolve conflicts by lobbying rather than fighting, and are proud of having a mother who stood up for her rights. Robichaud moved from blaming herself to an understanding of the larger context: "The issue is not how I handled it but that I had to handle it at all [...] I've learned so much from going through the struggle."

sexual harassment in the workplace

Sexual harassment is found in many workplaces, both small and large. It affects all employment sectors and has a serious impact on workplace climate, productivity and, of course, on the lives and health of harassed employees, most of them female. In Canada, the first national survey on the issue revealed that 49 per cent of women in the workforce have experienced at least one type of unwanted sexual attention.

The *Ontario Human Rights Code* defines harassment as "engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome." Sexual harassment includes unwelcome leering or suggestive looks, teasing, insults, subtle or crude sexual remarks and gestures, threats, blackmail, unwanted sexual or physical contact. It happens generally in the worksite, but can also occur in the cafeteria, at conferences, seminars and office parties.

Since 1987, employers are deemed legally responsible for harassment perpetrated by their staff, in their workplaces. Robichaud's case and others have helped the courts define sexual harassment and its consequences, and assign responsibility for addressing it. Sexual harassment is now included in both the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and the *Canadian Labour Code*. The Ontario Workers Compensation Act has been recently used to recognize sexual and racial harassment as "a personal injury" leading to "disablement" in the case of a female worker who was harassed so severely over many years that she had a breakdown which kept her off work for a long time. The woman was granted compensation benefits by the Worker's Compensation Board.

Sister Vision Press
Stephanie Martin and Makeda Silvera

In 1985, neither mainstream nor small feminist presses carried Black women authors. Only four Black women writers had been published in Canada. Those were reasons enough for two very committed women, Stephanie Martin and Makeda Silvera, with some colleagues, to start Sister Vision, Black Women and Women of Colour Press. They released their first book in 1985. By 1994, their book list was 40 titles long and included *The Seven Fires: An Ojibway Prophecy*; *Mada*, an erotic novel; and *Some Black Women, Profiles of Black Women in Canada*.

"We know that our vision and existence have opened the doors for dialogue about this lack of visibility and also forced other alternative presses to examine their mandates," say Martin and Silvera. Sister Vision's mandate is to publish books by Aboriginal, Black, and Asian women and women of mixed racial heritage living in Canada. It relies on the commitment of its three staff members who work for small salaries, and the extensive support of volunteers who publicize the products of the press, help new writers to find their voices, and keep abreast of community concerns.

Only three other women of colour presses exist in the world (in the United States, Great Britain and India), says Sister Vision. And, from a certain perspective, the goal of Sister Vision is to put itself out of business. When Black women and women of colour authors are as available through mainstream book publishers as other writers, then Sister Vision will have done its job.

Eileen Sufrin

Eileen Sufrin started her first job in one of the worst years of the Great Depression, 1931. She quickly figured out what exploitation meant: she was expected to teach commercial students from 9 to 5, teach night school two evenings a week and work Saturday mornings -- all for \$15 a week, \$3 above the minimum wage for women. "I became a socialist because I was very much aware of the tragic waste of unemployment in society," she said in a biography, *Where Angels Fear to Tread*. "The young people I knew were always on the lookout for work and would do any odd jobs just to take a few dollars home."

She joined the Co-operative Commonwealth Youth Movement and became national secretary in 1937. When the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, the precursor to the NDP, formed a Trade Union Committee in 1937, she became its paid secretary. Sufrin's decision "to take an interest in unions was very much linked to my belief that they were a necessary base for a socialist political party." A fundamental fact of organizing is that once a group of people are mobilized around better wages or job security, they can then go on to push for greater social changes.

Today, most unions help members develop skills to become organizers. But in the 1930s, few unions had those skills, so outsiders like Sufrin were called upon. She became a paid union organizer for the Steelworkers Organizing Committee, and in 1942 took part in a successful campaign to organize the John Inglis munitions plant where half the 17,000 employees were women. In 1947, she and other organizers began a five-year drive to unionize Eaton's workers. One issue was equal pay for equal work because Eaton's wages varied by age, sex and marital status. Women started at \$20/week, single men at \$24 - \$26, and married men at \$30. "Everyone recognized the pay system was wrong and needed to be replaced with proper job classification," says Sufrin. While the drive was ultimately unsuccessful by a narrow margin, the threat of a union forced Eaton's to increase wages and provide a pension plan for all its employees.

Sufrin next applied her considerable skills to organizing office workers who often made less than labourers in the same company. Women office workers, in turn, were often paid less than their male counterparts. Frequently the solution to these inequities was to demand a job evaluation, which Sufrin noted, was just a step away from equal pay for equal work.

Léa Tittley

More than 500 babies, including 16 of her own grandchildren, drew their first breath in Léa Tittley's capable hands. For 40 years, until her retirement, this resident of Alexandria in eastern Ontario's Glengarry county watched over births and helped women and their children.

From the first birth she officially attended as a midwife in 1926, Tittley, who learned her profession from her mother, was hooked: "From the moment that baby was born," she says, "I couldn't stop. A life is the most precious thing in the world." That first baby, a boy, would now be 68 years old.

Tittley is of a generation where women, particularly in rural areas like Glengarry county, made arrangements directly with a midwife, frequently without the involvement of a physician. Women came to her home and the mothers remained in bed for nine consecutive days, while Tittley watched over them and their newborns day and night. In 1957, 30 years into her practice, Tittley was charging only \$5 a day. A woman was never turned away because she couldn't afford to pay, and Tittley frequently accepted payment in kind in the form of wood for her stove, handmade clothing or, occasionally, a chicken. When women couldn't come to Tittley, she went to them.

Says one satisfied customer nearly forty years after her son's birth, "If I had it to do over again, I'd have a midwife! Mrs. Tittley was like a mother to us, always watching over us."

Pura Velasco

In the early 1980s, the repressive regime in the Philippines made it impossible for Pura Velasco and her husband to make enough money to support their family. Her husband had spent some time in Libya as a migrant worker, then it was Velasco's turn to work abroad. Although she was well aware that such action often caused families to fall apart, she "had no choice." She went first to Saudi Arabia as a migrant worker, then to Austria, and finally Canada, in 1990, as a domestic worker, sending money home to put her children through high school and university.

Velasco's upbringing had allowed her the privilege of attending university so she did not perceive herself as oppressed or as a worker, until a few employers treated her inhumanely. One employer, for example, "showed her off" to her friends because she could speak English and German. Soon after, she joined INTERCEDE, the Toronto Organization for Domestic Workers' Rights and was its president from 1990 to 1992.

Velasco has since moved into the area of institutional care, providing care for elderly and disabled people at mid-Toronto Community Services. She has taken training as an activation co-ordinator in gerontology. Velasco has become a landed immigrant and is sponsoring her three children, all young adults, to come to Canada.

Velasco helped start both the Philippine Women Workers Movement, which connects Philippine migrant workers all over the world, and the Community Care Givers of mid-Toronto. This co-operative of former and current domestic workers, will act as an employment agency for domestic workers, providing an alternative to existing agencies.

Rachel Zimmerman

When Rachel Zimmerman was 11 years old, she read some books about Helen Keller, Louis Braille and Bliss Symbolics. She quickly recognized the limitations of the Bliss system, and, at 12, taught herself computer graphics. She then invented a computer program which allows Cerebral Palsy sufferers and others to use the Bliss Symbolics system with minimal assistance. At 19, with colleague Susan O'Leary, she won first place at the London District Science and Technology Fair for a system which converts solar energy to electricity via the photosynthesis of algae. In 1994, Zimmerman was majoring in physics, with a liberal arts minor, on a scholarship at Brandeis University in the U.S.

Zimmerman credits two strong role models for providing guidance. Her mother was a computer programmer and owner of her own software development company. And, a Grade 7 teacher encouraged her not to let anything stand in her way. Zimmerman hasn't. Instead, she's taken advantage of every opportunity from speaking to other students in Newfoundland about inventing, to summer research positions at university labs, to representing Canada at various national and international science shows and competitions. Her efforts have already been widely acknowledged. She is listed with the

Canadian Women Inventor's Project.

Zimmerman isn't sure what career she wants to pursue, except to continue in work which combines science and arts. However, as a university physics major, she finds there are few female physicists who can be role models for young women like herself.

Bliss Symbolics

Bliss Symbolics were originally developed as a universal language of symbols to promote international communication. They help people unable to articulate sounds to overcome language barriers.

The Bliss board was named after the system's inventor, Rudolph Bliss. It is a flat board covered in symbols, rather than letters. The user points to symbols and, often, an assistant formulates and articulates the user's composition. (With inventions such as Rachel Zimmerman's, users have less need for assistants.) Users are free to add an infinite number of symbols (for example, a barn) or create new meanings by combining core symbols (such as animal, plus house). This feature of the language makes it poetic and dense with layers of meaning, much like the sign language used by hearing impaired persons. The ability to communicate by pointing to a relatively small number of cards or signs makes Bliss useful to those with severe muscular disabilities and co-ordination problems.

Bliss Symbolics came to public attention in 1982, during a precedent-setting court case which decided on the mental capacity of Bliss-user Justin Clark, who had cerebral palsy. Clark had been raised in the Rideau Regional Centre for the developmentally handicapped in Smiths Falls. He was classified as profoundly retarded until a new teacher trained in Bliss Symbolics discovered his hidden talents. Clark thrived on the new language and after several years opted to leave the institution. His decision sparked the court challenge to his mental capacity. For the first time in Canada, a court agreed to accept the use of Bliss Symbolics in testimony. After a dramatic hearing, Clark was judged capable of making up his own mind about where he chose to live.

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